



State of Alaska
Frank H. Murkowski, Governor



DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
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NEWS RELEASE

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ADF&G Clarifies its Policy Regarding Anchorage Bear Calls

(Juneau) - In recent days, there have been questions about the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's policy regarding bear calls in Anchorage. Unfortunately, the Department has never had, and never will have, enough resources or staff to respond to every bear call.

Faced with an ever-increasing volume of late-night and early-morning bear calls in the Anchorage area, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) is clarifying that it is only able to respond to those that involve an emergency or urgent need for response.

"We believe the changes that Mayor Begich is announcing today regarding trash pickup times and bear-proof trash containers are an excellent start. Unfortunately, unless and until all Anchorage residents keep their garbage away from bears, I expect the calls to continue to escalate," said McKie Campbell, ADF&G commissioner.

By state law, situations involving public safety are typically handled by law enforcement authorities, but there are times when advice from a biologist can help guide decisions and improve the safety of everyone involved, Campbell said. ADF&G will continue to enforce the state law against feeding wildlife. Municipal officials are responsible for the enforcement of the existing municipal ordinance regarding trash storage.

Citizens who are dealing with a bear that is causing damage or danger should call Anchorage Police dispatch or Alaska State Troopers dispatch. Calls where a biologist's presence would prove helpful will be forwarded to an on-call ADF&G employee. It will be up to the on-call employee to decide whether a response is necessary and appropriate.

Examples would include if a person actually is injured by a bear, an injured bear, a bear in a building, or the presence of a moose carcass that has a bear on it (or some other significant food source) in the vicinity of human activities. Another possibility would be the presence of a bear near a school after classes resume next month.

"When one person leaves garbage out, it attracts bears to the neighborhood," said Jessy Coltrane, assistant area biologist for Anchorage. "The association that bears then make between humans and food can ultimately be deadly for the bears and potentially dangerous for humans."

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